

# Minnesota Health Departments Implement Breastfeeding-Friendly Practices

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## SUMMARY

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) provides technical assistance and program support for the statewide Breastfeeding-Friendly Health Departments (BFHD) program. The program was originally piloted by 10 local public health departments in Minnesota. BFHD provides a 10-step process and toolkit for supporting breastfeeding practices at local public health agencies and tribal health boards. MDH also recognizes local public health departments and tribal health boards that put into action all or some of the 10 steps at the bronze, silver, and gold levels.



## CHALLENGE

Breastfeeding is the optimal method for infant feeding and promotes positive health outcomes for both mothers and infants. Experts recommend exclusive breastfeeding for about 6 months. However, in Minnesota, only 48.6% and 21.7% of mothers are exclusively breastfeeding at 3 and 6 months, respectively. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified worksites as a setting that can support breastfeeding.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

In addition to providing materials on how to become breastfeeding-friendly for health departments and tribal health boards, MDH's website also provides materials on this topic for other organizations. This includes childcare providers, workplaces, and maternity centers. The site also provides mothers with breastfeeding information and answers to frequently asked questions. For organizations that want to support breastfeeding mothers, the Information for Professionals portal provides many resources. For more information visit: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/bf/index.html>.

*"Offering health departments in Minnesota the opportunity to be recognized for their breastfeeding efforts with a tested, best-practice program has increased momentum around the state. This effort will increase the acceptance of breastfeeding and help more moms get the support they need to breastfeed their babies."*

- Susan Bishop

## Contact

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## SOLUTION

The Dakota County Health Department developed the BFHD program to provide breastfeeding support at local public health agencies and tribal health boards. The program developed 10 key steps that were adapted from other programs (e.g., Wisconsin BFHD project). Minnesota piloted BFHD in 10 local health departments. The 10-step-process practices include to have a written breastfeeding policy in place and support mothers to initiate and maintain breastfeeding for 12 months and beyond. After the successful pilot of the BFHD program, staff in the Dakota County Public Health Department developed a toolkit to guide local health departments to become breastfeeding-friendly through the 10 steps.

## RESULTS

The 10 local health departments that participated in the BFHD pilot all completed pre- and post-initiative self-assessments. Across all departments, the self-assessment data showed progress was made in putting into action all of BFHD's 10 steps. Respondents noted that these improvements increased the capacity of the health departments to promote breastfeeding and increased the capacity of the health departments to develop policies that promote breastfeeding. In 2015—on the basis of the achievements and overall success of the BFHD pilot program in 10 sites—MDH launched a statewide BFHD recognition program. MDH developed a three-tiered recognition system (bronze, silver, and gold) for local health departments to be acknowledged for their achievements in breastfeeding-friendly practices. Two of the 10 BFHD pilot sites—Dakota and Freeborn counties—achieved the highest recognition level.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
NCCDPHP

### Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

### Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

MDH will continue to provide local health departments with technical assistance and materials to support all Minnesota health departments and tribal health boards to carry out BFHD's 10 steps and obtain recognition.

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